Dear Dave, re Greg Stone's suicide and what follows 2/4/91

In a sense this is a mea culpa, I address what may occur to you when you read the enclosed memo on Roger Feinman's phone call of last night. I do it now because it is too early to phone Cyril. And I want to do all relating to this matter before I return to the terrible clutter on my desk and reading and correcting the prologue to The King Conspiracies draft. My mind doesn't shift gears as fluidly as once it did.

To begin with I had no questions at all about Garrison. He struck me as a typical DA from what at first appeared in the papers. When I began to have some questions I still thought this way and then I believed that what I regarded as excesses were his fighting fire with fire. Sylvia was more perceptive. From almost the first she regarded him correctly as an Any Hand character. She also went too far, and this is probably what deterred my reassessment of him and what he was up to. And example is her giving that terrible person, Thornley, a contribution of $100 for his defense.

Earlier I made a serious mistake about critics in general. I presumed that while there would inevitably be disagreements in detail, we would all be genuine and without ulterior purpose. So, when after Sylvia's glowing description of it before it was out, I began prejudiced in favor of Epstein's Inquest and before I read it, when Viking's Tom Gervasi gave me a copy and asked me to help him promote it (at the annual American Booksellers' Association convention in the Shoreham), I did all I could to be helpful. Typically Epstein wasn't there. He avoided any kind of contention, with a rare exception when he later did very well against Lane in California. For example, if he knew, Epstein was not cooperating in the promotional efforts, so he had nothing to do with the documents added to the paperback reprint. I directed Gervasi to them. So much for Lifton's great "discovery." Which I'd earlier directed Paul Hoch to and Paul was probably Lifton's original source, not the multitudinous xeroxes Viking distributed to promote the paperback.

So, we all make mistakes. As I told you, I'd told Greg some time ago, not later than our first conversation after I read the Spy Spag ms., not to trust him, that he was trying to stake out a claim to own the political assassinations, how awful and irresponsible The Murkin Conspiracy is, too, and I may well have told him that if he questioned my judgement, to ask you. If I did not tell you this, perhaps I should have. But I did not anticipate anything like happened even being possible. I had no such suspicion at all, although I did feel, as I think he later told us both, that he felt burned out.

An aside: he is the second of Lowenstein's devoted student helpers who could not take the pressure. The other one killed Lowenstien. I hope there are no others of whom I do not know.

In retrospect, and we can always see looking backward what we did not see looking ahead, I believe that Greg's call to you just before he killed himself was when he was considering changing his will to cut Melanson out. If this is true, you have no reason to exonerate yourself because you also had no reason to anticipate the tragedy. You softened what you said because you perceived that Grag was troubled by something and did not want to trouble him more, Melanson being one of his associates. I'm sure that if he had given you any indication of his real state of mind or his possible purpose or if he had told you what I told him, you would have been as blunt as I was.

There is something we can and I believe should all learn from this: we should under all the conditions I can now think of put forthrightness first, it and truth, and when asked opinions, under most circumstances should say what we think. In a sense I am not in a position to seem to lecture on this, and I do not intend to be lecturing, because when a Baltimore Sun reporter asked me about Livingstone's High Treason, I told him that I did not want to comment on it. Livingstone is a Baltimorean. (And as I've just learned, educated as a lawyer and an authentic and decorated hero as of his law-school days.) It probably was not possible for any of us, not knowing his state of mind, to have done anything to discourage Greg, but we might have kept that authentic bastard Melanson from corrupting Greg's fine work and misusing it to promote himself. And now I'll see if Cyril is on. After again saying that if in retrospect you can see what I consider possible, do not blame yourself. Best to you all, Harold

Harold

More on Greg Stone's suicide 2/4/91

Roger has the name and I forgot to note it of the man who put the death notice in the paper or called it to the Post's (?) attention.

It was in the park mentioned in the Post's obit, Fernwood Park. If I recall correctly - I was about to get into bed - about 2 p.m. and it was as the Post said, last Tuesday. Greg used a 38 cal. pistol or revolver.

Greg had prepared for this for weeks from what Roger and Jerry Policoff have learned. He left notes, in his car and in his apartment. He also left a will.

Roger's understanding is the he left all his personal papers to Melanson.

Roger does not know whether he also left Sylvia Meagher's papers to Melanson.

(That he left his personal papers to Melanson is inconsistent with his phone conversation with Ms. Weatherby. He told her he would have no more to do with Phil. He also questioned Wrone about Melanson just before he killed himself and Wrone sugar-coated it.)

Tony Summers knew about the suicide in time to talk to Mary Ferrell about it last Thursday. (I suppose via the ARRI people, perhaps Bud Fensin Lesar.)

I am to phone Cyril Wecht this morning to ask him if he will see if he can get copies of the notes and any other information from Greg's records. from the L.A. coroner.

Roger did not mention it but I think the date on the will is important. It does not seem natural that so young a man who have made a will and I wonder if Melanson, detecting Greg's state of mind, persuaded him to make it out the way reported.

Quite some time ago I had been quite blunt with Greg about Melanson, first telling him bluntly not to trust him, that his record was of trying to stake out ownership of the subject of the political assassination by two incredible bad books, The Mirkin Conspiracy and Spy Saga. I am not sure but I think I told him in detail about Spy Saga. Perhaps this is why he phoned Dave just before he killed himself. If so, Dave's restricting his comments as he did could have persuaded Greg not to change his will.

Greg had a woman assistant. Roger or Jerry is to try to get in touch with her.

Roger had to keep the call short, I had started to get into bed, tired and sleepy, and I may have missed something or gotten some wrong so I'll send him this for any changes, corrections or additions.

Unrelated but also impending bad news is Roger's information that Oliver Stone's documentary is to be based on Garrison's monstrous and utterly dishonest On the Trail of the Assassins and Marrs' frightful compendium of all the nutty assassination theories.

412/281-9090

~~Secret "Social Agent to the Press, Interrogation~~ SA

~~Plot up on Jack Montiton~~